



The Norman Bird Flyer

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 5 NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY, THIRD BEACH ROAD, MIDDLETOWN, RHODE ISLAND 02840 PHONE: 401-846-2577

BARN OWLS

George Norman probably never dreamed his watertower, built sometime toward the end of the 19th century, would prove useful housing barn owls in the 20th century. Then again George Norman's proclivity was water, not birds of the night.

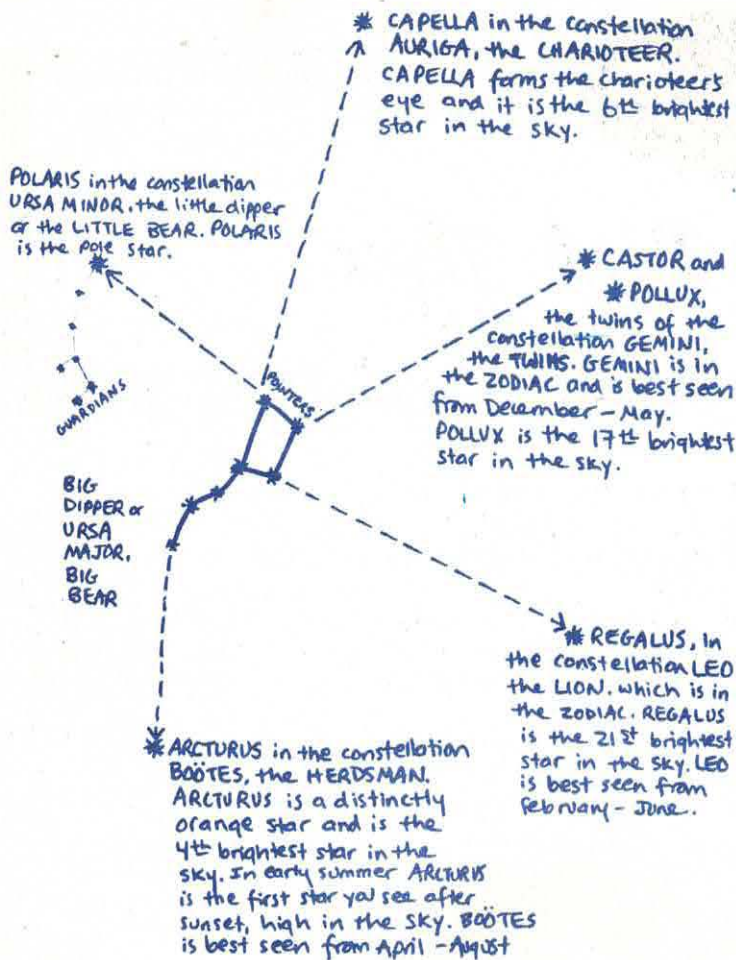
The barn owl is the creature who often gives a house its haunted reputation. Living in abandoned buildings, steeples, silos, wind mills and factories, barn owls make sounds strange enough to raise the hairs on a hardened paint brush.

We are quite lucky to have the barn owls here. This year the parents, who well could be the same pair using the tower for the last 5 years, are raising 3 young. From the parking lot at dusk you can often spot one or the other adult circling their tower before heading over the fields for the hunt. You may hear a farewell shriek, an indescribable and ungodly vocalization. If you didn't know it was a barn owl you might question the motives and desires of the unknown animal and run for your life.

Barn owls encompass their own family of owls, Tytonidae. They occur worldwide and make their homes often near man. Appearance is one thing that sets them apart from owls in the family Strigidae. Barn owls are medium-sized birds with surprisingly large wing spans. They can flap their wings discordantly to maneuver and can even hover like moths. Small mahogany colored eyes in the middle of white facial disks and an aquiline bill gives them a monkey-faced look. They are tawny birds with white, brown-speckled breasts.

Of all the owls barn owls have the most sensitive hearing. When hunting, usually within ten feet of the ground, they rely heavily on hearing to zero in on prey. Before hitting the prey they utter a sharp hiss or snap of the bill which freezes the prey in defensive behavior. With the ceasing of the sound they can pinpoint their prey. In one night adults will eat half their weight in small mammals, another reason the sanctuary, with its revolving population of geese, ducks, rabbits, and rooster, is lucky to have them. Barn owls prey on the mice and rats that eat goose and chicken feed. One study noted one parent bird bringing 16 mice, 1 squirrel, 3 gophers, and 1 rat to a nest in one night.





KEY TO THE STARS

Find the Big Dipper and you have found the most well-known form in the northern sky and a key to many other important stars and constellations.

The Dipper is one of only a few groups of stars that never set. We can see it at any time on any night of the year.

The Big Dipper is known in Europe as the Grand Sleigh (another point of view!) and is part of the constellation Ursa Major, the Big Bear. The two end stars of its bowl, known as the Pointers, point directly at Polaris, the North Star. Polaris is the most important navigational star because it is the only star that never moves. Because the north axis of the earth points right at it, it appears to stand still while all the other stars revolve around it.

As the diagram shows, you can find several other stars by following the Dipper's lead.

August 1-30 is the time of the Perseid Meteor Shower. The meteors appear to come from the region of the sky around the constellation Perseus.

BARN OWLS cont.

Young birds can eat their weight in a night, and any surplus food caught they will eat during the day. The parents sleep. The young keep eating.

Our owls, judging from the pile of bones and pellets (regurgitated packets of bone, fur, and feather), find plenty in the fields and forest edges of the sanctuary.

Middletown seems to be one of the last strongholds for barn owls in RI according to DEM officials. Old farm buildings are one key to their success is Middletown. The other factor is the land kept open for agriculture.

A sing and piece of wire mesh is all that insures the protection of our owls, and of course, the upkeep of the old tower itself. Come out some night and listen!

ART FAIR REVIEW

We are happy to report that the Norman Bird Sanctuary's first Art Fair was a fantastic success. Both profitable (the fair raised just over 1,100 dollars for the museum) and fun (over 300 people attended the preview party and many stayed into the evening).

Special thanks go out to co-chair Patty Vaillancourt and Happy Van Buren for pouring endless hours of thought, time, and energy into the fair. We thank the many volunteers who helped with planning the event, lighting the building, cooking hors d'oeuvres, donating plants, and helping hang the pictures. We don't want to forget the artists who exhibited either! What a splendid showing it was, as evidenced by the number of paintings that sold. Lastly, thanks to all of you who came during the week and made it the really fun event that it was. We are already looking forward to next spring's show.

GREETINGS!

The sanctuary extends a hearty welcome to Cathy Moore who joined the advisory committee in July. Cathy and Tim Moore have been long time friends and volunteer workers for the bird sanctuary. They have helped with harvest fairs and supported the sanctuary by participating in many sanctuary events. They operate the Newport Plant and Garden Shop on Bellevue Avenue. We are very glad to have her.

HERB HARVEST

In the fields lies a medicine chest. It is hidden in the leaves, roots, stalks, and flowers of dozens of herbs that bloom and grow on our native soil. Relief of poison ivy itch rests in the juices of the jewel weed or potted touch-me-not growing by the pond. Yarrow makes a strong tea sure to help a cold or flu. Wild cherry bark is used to silence a cough. Willow bark contains salicylic acid, better known as aspirin.

There are plants such as knapweed whose properties make them astringents- drying and drawing out fluids, taking the pain out of bee stings or mosquito bites. Red clover is used to treat cancerous tumors. There are plants to be taken internally in the form of tinctures. Externally taken salves and linaments can ease the body of pain from bruises to hemorrhoids, fungal infections, and acne. The juices from the herb chelodine will even remove your warts.

According to Hap Morgan, now teaching an herb class at the sanctuary, medical herbalism has come a long way from the day of the fly-by-night "snake cure" salesman whose primary ingredients were fast talk and alcohol. Herbs don't offer a substitute for modern medicine but take up a middle ground in the treatment of less chronic ailments. Herbs won't set a broken bone yet comfrey, or knit bone by one of its common names, could speed a broken bones' recovery.

Many of the old home remedies worked to a degree. When herbs were all settlers had they paid more attention to their apparent qualities. Since many of our modern medicines come from plants. are synthesized compounds found in plants, it makes sense some of the old cures worked. Digitalis from the dried leaves of the common foxglove keeps thousands of heart patients alive every year.

The herb class put together a salve from St. John's wort, comfrey, plantain, collendula, olive oil, and bee's wax. Very pleasant smelling and soothing on the skin, it is an all-purpose salve good for sore muscles, cuts, and skin irritations.

The sanctuary library has a small collection of herb books which members are welcomed to browse through or borrow. Just knowing some of the uses of the wild herbs makes looking for them much more interesting.



PLANTAIN



YARROW

TURTLE TRUTHS

Painted turtles need only eat every 2 weeks to sustain themselves. The male painted turtle's nails are much larger than the female's, but the female is much larger overall.

You can now view these turtles in a temporary pen set up for the sanctuary by Rodney Davis. Painted turtles, recognized by the yellow lines around the edge of their olive-brown backs and by the bright red spots edging their shell and on their legs, are our most common turtle. You can usually see 4 or 5 sunning on the rocks and submerged logs of maple swamp pond.

HAIKU

Haiku is an old form of Japanese poetry in which the writer tries to capture a mood or thought in just three lines, of exactly 5, 7, and 5 syllables each, respectively. The following haiku were written by children in the Norman Bird Sanctuary's Nature Day Camp as a follow-up activity to a morning of sensory exploration or rock climbing.

Rock climbing is fun
It's also scary and hard
But it makes you proud
Unsigned

When I sit up here
I can see some trees with leaves
And I see the sky
Fiona Simpson age 8

I see some branches
Where birds and owls sleep and live
And days: days, months, years
Jimmy Cawley age 8

The fresh smell of leaves
The peaceful chatter of birds
The free sensation
David Polatty age 10

Little animals
Some of them are badly hurt
They are being helped
George DiGregorio age 10

Trees hide the sun
A small hut under the trees
My own quiet place
Unsigned

Hanging like a spider
Dangling free on my long rope
Scared out of my head
Bobby Fenner age 13

In the green bushes
Eating purple raspberries
Are Allie and me
Lisa Stevens age 10

HARVEST FAIR

Plans for this years' Aquidneck Island Harvest Fair are underway. On Sunday the 19th of July 25 interested members came to the sanctuary for a potluck in the orchard. After dinner committee lists circulated and ideas new and old were shared. It promises to be another major event for Aquidneck Island. It's off to a good start, but MORE VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!

Working committees have been started in the following areas: Children's Games, Auction, Adult Games, Logistics, Publicity, Food Committee, Farm and Home Displays and Competition, Entertainment, and Crafts. Every committee could use more support, but there is especially a need in the Children's Games Committee, Entertainment, Auction, and Food Committee.

Have you got an original idea for the harvest fair, or would you like to have your own booth? Booths are \$30. or \$20. if you are demonstrating your craft.

You are needed to bake pies and cakes, person a booth, give out tickets at the gate, direct traffic, press cider, lift children onto a hay wagon, flip hamburgers, set up tables, etc.... Call soon!!!

VOLUNTEER POWER

The sanctuary owes special thanks to the volunteers of June and July who, when most people would rather be swimming, worked to keep the sanctuary going.

Mary Talbot and Bobby Fenner helped keep the animals watered and fed and the cages cleaned. John Braman contributed his fix-it skills and was able to find climbing ropes and hardware for summer camp use.

Members responded to our pleas and donated a copy machine, a push lawn mower, and a sit-down lawn mower! We were also able to offer 4 children free sessions of summer camp thanks to sanctuary sponsors.

A big thank-you to all!

SPRING BULBS

If you have visited the sanctuary this summer you have surely noticed the beautiful perennial garden by the front entrance and the newly landscaped rear courtyard. Our flower gardener tells us that any leftover fall or spring bulbs you might have would be welcomed here for these areas. Thanks!

Illustrations by Lucia deLeiris

What's Happening at the Sanctuary?

FIELD WALKS

Trees of the Norman Bird Sanctuary - Jeff Hall has worked this summer on surveying all the trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants in the Sanctuary. He'll share some of what he's learned with us on this walk as he points out the common and rare trees of the Sanctuary.

Star Walk - These popular walks continue with a discussion of the late summer constellations and the myths behind them.

Wild Edibles - An introduction to some of the delicious foods found right outside our doors. Recipes included!

Evening Bird Walks - A quiet evening stroll as the birds come out to feed. Bring binoculars, if you have them.

Fall Wildflowers - These flowers have been waiting all summer for their chance and now they're out in full beauty. We'll concentrate on learning the different asters and goldenrods.

Herb Walk - An introduction to common plants which can be used as medicine and food, by Hap Morgan.

MUSIC AND ARTS

Nature Songs for Children - Sam Bartlett is back again with his banjo and more songs from his repertoire of sing-a-longs for children.

Drawing From Nature - Bring your sketch pad, pencil and eraser and join Lucia and Mary deLeiris in a session of nature sketching. All levels of expertise welcome!

Folksong Sing-a-long - Come sing your favorites and learn a few new ones as well. The Honeyman Singers will lead a few they've been practicing.

SHORT COURSES

A Study of Herbs - This four-part course, taught by Hap Morgan, will cover general principles of Herbal

Medicines, plant identification and harvesting, herbal preparations, and herbs for family use.

Cost: \$20 non-members, \$15 members
Call 846-2577 to register

SPECIAL SANCTUARY EVENTS

Harvest Fair Meeting - A chance for all the different committees to meet and report on their progress. If you're not already on a committee, come join one! Bring something sweet for a pot-luck dessert.

Aquidneck Island Day - Free admission to all residents of Aquidneck Island. A good chance to introduce your friends and neighbors to the Sanctuary. Walks and tours all through the day.

Indian Artifacts - Lisa Pritchard has worked this summer on sorting and identifying the Sanctuary's fine collection of Narragansett Indian relics. She'll discuss their history and demonstrate the use of several of them.

FIELD TRIPS

Meadowbrook Herb Farm - We'll browse through their gardens and greenhouse, where a huge variety of herbs are grown biodynamically. All plants are labeled. Many herbs and books are sold in their shop. Bring a picnic lunch.

Narrow River Canoe Trip - Spend a day paddling and observing on this wide tidal river. Bring binoculars, field guides and lunch. Call the Sanctuary for details and to register.

EVERY SUNDAY

Morning Bird Walk - A chance to learn some new birds or bone up on those that you know. Everyone welcome.

Public Tour - An introduction to the Sanctuary through a tour of the buildings and grounds and a brief natural history walk. Watch for special events replacing the tours on selected days.

The Norman Bird Flyer is published by the Norman Bird Sanctuary, a non-profit nature preserve established under the will of Mabel Norman Cerio.
Trustees: RI Hospital Trust National Bank, Louis Lorillard
Advisory Committee: Luise Tower - Chair, Norman Hall, Robert Edenbach, Richard Kozlara, Barbara Sturtevant, Peter Randall, Hope Van Beuren, George Warren, Charlotte Van Hoi, Christine Callahan, Stephen Erickson, Harriet Phelps, Albert Sherman, Patty Vaillancourt, Katherine Moore
Co-Directors: Timothy Traver, Deborah Clark

Norman Bird Sanctuary Events

AUGUST 1981 BIRD WALK 8:00 AM PUBLIC TOUR 2:00				○ FULL MOON ● FIRST QUARTER	● NEW MOON ○ LAST QUARTER	
BIRD WALK 8:00 AM PUBLIC TOUR 2:00	HERBAL MEDICINE CLASS BEGINS 6:00 - 8:00 PM	EVENING BIRD WALK w/ PAUL KELLEY OF SACHVEST POINT 7:00		INDIAN ARTIFACTS 7:30 HERB CLASS #2	DRAWING FROM NATURE 10:00 AM	
BIRD WALK 8:00 AM HERBS FOR HOME USE 2:00	FOLKSONGS FOR CHILDREN 7:00 HERB CLASS #3	EVENING BIRD WALK 7:00	STAR WALK 8:30	HERB CLASS #4 STAR WALK RAIN DATE 8:30		
* AQUIDNECK ISLAND DAY		SEPTEMBER 1	WILD EDIBLES WALK 7:00 AM		TREES OF THE NORMAN BIRD SANCTUARY 10:00 AM	
BIRD WALK 8:00 AM PUBLIC TOUR 2:00	LABOR DAY			HARVEST FAIR COMMITTEES GENERAL MEETING. POT- LUCK DESSERT! 7:00	MEADOWBROOK HERB FARM FIELD TRIP 11:00	
BIRD WALK 8:00 AM PUBLIC TOUR 2:00			FOLKSONG SING-A-LONG 7:30			
BIRD WALK 8:00 AM FALL WILDFLOWERS 2:00		AUTUMNAL EQUINOX			NARROW RIVER CANOE TRIP	

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